

coin of small denominations now in circulation; which it is difficult to withdraw because they pass by tale for much more than their intrinsic value—a practical seniorage, from which there is no benefit to any body, and much embarrassment in the phraseology of our money, especially to foreigners.

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*Stated Meeting, April 6.*

Present, twelve members.

Dr. DUNGLISON, Vice-President, in the Chair.

Letters were read:—

From Don P. de Angelis, dated Montevideo, Dec. 1, 1854, and from Dr. N. B. Shurtleff, dated Boston, March 14, 1855, announcing donations for the library: and—

From the Royal Academy of Sciences, at Turin, dated Nov. 24, 1854, returning thanks for Transactions and Proceedings of this Society.

The following donations were announced:—

FOR THE LIBRARY.

Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History. Vol. V. No.

7, 8, 9. Feb. March, 1855. Boston. 8vo.—*From the Society.*

Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Vol. VIII. No. 7. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From the Academy.*

The African Repository. Vol. XIII. No. 3. March, 1855. Washington. 8vo.—*From the American Colonization Society.*

Journal of the Franklin Institute. 3d Series. Vol. XXIX. No. 3.

March, 1855. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From the Institute.*

Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in

New England. Printed by order of the Legislature. Edited by N.

B. Shurtleff, M.D., &c. &c. Vol. III. 1644—1657. Vol. IV. Part

1. 1650—1660. Boston, 1854. 4to.—*From the Editor.*

Twelfth Report to the Legislature of Massachusetts, relating to the

Registry and Returns of Births, Marriages and Deaths in the

Commonwealth, for the year ending Dec. 31, 1853. By Ephraim

N. Wright, Secretary of the Commonwealth. Boston, 1854.

8vo.—*From N. B. Shurtleff, M.D.*

Twenty-second Annual Report of the Managers of the Pennsylvania

Institution for the Instruction of the Blind; together with Dr.

- Dunglison's Letter on the Blind and Institutions for the Blind in Europe. Philadelphia, 1855. 8vo.—*From Dr. Dunglison.*
- The Eye in Health and Disease; with an account of the Optometer for the adaptation of Glasses for impaired, aged or defective sight; being the substance of Lectures delivered at the Central London Ophthalmic Hospital. By Alfred Smee, F.R.S., Surgeon to the Bank of England, &c. &c. London, 1854. 8vo.—*From the Author.*
- De la Navigation de l'Amazone; reponse à un mémoire de M. Maury, Officier de la Marine des Etats Unis:—par M. de Angelis. Montevideo, 1855. 8vo.—*From the Author.*
- Natuurkundige Verhandelingen van de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen te Haarlem. Achtste Deel. Haarlem, 1853. 4to.—*From the Holland Society of Sciences at Haarlem.*
- The Astronomical Journal. Vol. IV. No. 10. Cambridge, March 23, 1855. 4to.—*From Dr. B. A. Gould, jr., Editor.*
- Report of the Select Committee of the Senate of Pennsylvania, in relation to the progress and present condition of the State Geological Survey. Harrisburg, 1855. 8vo.—*From Eli K. Price, Esq.*
- Speech of Eli K. Price, Esq., on the bill entitled "An Act relating to Corporations and to Estates held for Corporate, Religious and Charitable uses," in the Senate of Pennsylvania, March 21, 1855. Harrisburg. 8vo.—*From the Author.*
- Catalogue of the Miscellaneous Library of E. D. Ingraham, Esq., sold March, 1855, by M. Thomas & Sons. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From M. Thomas & Sons.*
- The Florist and Horticultural Journal. Vol. IV. No. 3. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From H. C. Hanson, Editor.*
- The Plough, the Loom and the Anvil. Vol. VII. No. 9. March, 1855. New York. 8vo.—*From Myron Finch, Editor.*
- The American Journal of the Medical Sciences. No. LVIII. New Series. April, 1855. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From Dr. Isaac Hays, Editor.*
- Documentos, relativos a la Mision del Honorable Sr. Don Tomas Hood, Agente Especial del Gobierno de S. M. B. cerca del Gobierno de Buenos-Aires, encargado de las relaciones exteriores de la Confederacion Argentina. Buenos-Aires, 1846. 4to. — *From Don P. de Angelis.*
- Descripcion de la Nueva Provincia de Otuquis en Bolivia. Por Mauricio Bach, Secretario del misma provincia. Buenos-Aires, 1843. 4to.—*From the same.*

Historical Sketch of Pepys' Island, in the South Pacific Ocean, from the work on the Rio de la Plata: by P. de Angelis. Buenos-Aires, 1842. 8vo.—*From the Author.*

Mr. J. R. Tyson, pursuant to appointment at a former meeting, read an obituary notice of William Peter, Esq., a deceased member of the Society.

William Peter was born on the 22d March, 1788, at a country place, called *Harlyn*, the seat of his forefathers in Cornwall, England. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated as Bachelor of Arts in 1807, and became Master of Arts in 1809. He studied law and was called to the bar by the Society of Lincoln's Inn, on the 28th May, 1813.

Mr. Peter seems not to have been long engaged in the courts, as a legal practitioner, but succeeding to the paternal estates upon the death of his father in 1821, he devoted his time between literary and domestic pleasures, and the discharge of those duties which devolved upon him as deputy warden and deputy lieutenant of the county.

Upon the death of his father-in-law in 1825, he removed to his wife's place, called Chiverton, in the same county, where he continued to reside for eight years. Here he acted for several years as a county magistrate, chairman of the Quarter Sessions of Cornwall, and chairman of several political bodies known as reform associations.

In 1832, after the reform act had enlarged the constituency, he was elected to Parliament for Bodmin. This reform he contributed to effect by unprecedented exertions in Cornwall. The opposition he met with was commensurate with the magnitude of the interests involved in the contest. Such was the inequality of representation under the borough system which Mr. Peter aided so much to destroy, that Cornwall alone returned only *two members less to Parliament than the whole of Scotland*. He was the life and soul, the mind, tongue and pen of the reform party in that county against a host of talent, rank and wealth, arrayed against him. Owing to the ardour and impetuosity of his character which admitted of no compromises with his opponents, he became as much the mark of the tories as he was the idol of the whigs. His popularity was such, that though the election for the borough was contested by three candidates and all of liberal politics, Mr. Peter was returned, without expense to himself, by a large majority.

After the dissolution of Parliament in 1835, Mr. Peter did not again appear in public life. He withdrew to the continent, where he held

for some time, a consular appointment. He improved the opportunity which his foreign residence afforded him of forming intimacies with some of the most distinguished scholars and men of learning in the countries he visited. In 1840, he was appointed Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for Pennsylvania, and came to Philadelphia, where he spent the residue of his life. He soon found here many congenial friends, whose society he liked, and to whom his highly social spirit, kind heart, and acquaintance with books and men, rendered him always acceptable. He was received into membership of this Society, on the sixteenth day of April, 1841.

He died on Sunday afternoon, 6th day of February, 1853, in the 64th year of his age.

Mr. Peter's taste, was eminently literary. His classical education was good, and he was especially fond of Greek literature. In the quiet country life which he led for some years in England, he had full opportunity for the indulgence of this passion. He had read much, especially of history and poetry. In several of the modern languages, he had attained great proficiency, being well acquainted with German, French, and Italian. But all his acquisitions of this kind were through the eye. His vocal organs did not enable him to speak either of these tongues, and he had no ear to understand them when pronounced. Yet his attainments were thorough, he had mastered their idiomatic niceties, and was conversant with their leading writers. In the early part of his life, he wrote various essays, chiefly, it is believed, on political questions. Several of these pamphlets have from time to time fallen in my way; but being on temporary and local topics, they need not be referred to here; one, I remember, was a highly ingenious and plausible argument in favour of the *viva voce* system of public suffrage, over that by ballot. There is no doubt, that the nobility and gentry of England prefer that mode of giving expression to popular preference: but it may be doubted whether the open vote is best for those in the lower walks of life, whose social and pecuniary condition places them in a state of dependency upon the higher classes. He published in England, an edition of the works of Sir Samuel Romilly, to which he prefixed a very interesting account of his life. This undertaking was a labour of love; for he manifests in his sketch, as he always discovered in his conversation, the highest appreciation of the virtues, learning and abilities of the subject of his memoir. The biography justly places Romilly where his career entitles him to stand—among the purest and most illustrious of England's worthies.

Mr. Peter translated from the Italian, *Manzoni's Fifth of May*, and various fugitive verses, some of which have superior poetical merit. In the same manner he published with his translation of *Schiller's William Tell*, sundry smaller pieces, most of them also from the German. This dramatic poem, in celebration of the great deliverer of Switzerland, he translated in Lucerne, in 1837. In the year 1839, appeared another volume containing poetical translations of Schiller's *Marie Stuart* and *the Battle with the Dragon*. He added to the edition which he published in this city, several miscellaneous original pieces of rare excellence and beauty. His *Maid of Orleans* was translated in Philadelphia, and in this volume also, are contained some of his best original verses. The *Maid of Orleans* is generally regarded as the most polished and felicitous of his versions from Schiller.

To these various works he added a volume of considerable size, entitled, "Specimens of the Poets and Poetry of Greece and Rome." It was first published at Philadelphia, in 1847. This production has been pronounced in England, to be "the most thorough and satisfactory popular summary of ancient poetry, ever made in the English language."

A translation followed of Æschylus's *Agamemnon* from the Greek, which he published in this city, in 1852. It has the merit of being literal, but scholars, I think, do not generally accord to it a very near approximation to the spirit of the original. In the brief notice contained of Mr. Peter in the Gentleman's Magazine for April, 1853, it is mentioned that he translated *Prometheus* from the same author. This, I believe, is a mistake. Mr. Peter tells us, in his preface to *Agamemnon*, that ever since his classic days at Oxford, he had been "possessed with an earnest longing to translate the Prometheus and the Agamemnon of Æschylus;" but that, like the slothful man in scripture, he had always some "lion in his way," until his arrival in America, when he set about the undertaking in good earnest, and had been able to finish only a portion of his task. The other and more attractive division of his long deferred labour, was postponed till death prevented the execution of his projects and intentions.

Mr. Peter was devoted to poetry. He intensely admired Milton, and, I believe, he could repeat from memory, the most of *Paradise Lost*. As some evidence of his relish of good poetry and his fondness for rendering it into English, I may mention, that he translated the *Leonore of Bürger* in the train of cars, on a journey to Washington. He told me, that in reading it, he was so delighted with the imagina-

tive wildness of the story, and the beauty and spirit of its execution, that he was able to fix in his mind, while on the way, the appropriate English dress of each of the more difficult or delicate passages, and, that he had nothing to do, on his return, but to commit the whole to paper. His own versification is surpassingly happy in its poetical diction, and its sprightly, easy and elegant flow.

But, Mr. Peter was not merely well read in the ancient and modern poets. He was well acquainted with general history, with English politics and the genealogy of the English peerage. He belonged to the whig school, and regarded republicanism as the dream of visionary folly. He was well acquainted with the English arguments in favour of free trade, but he could not see that though its doctrine might be applicable to England, it might *not* be suited to the situation of a country, whose capacity and resources were undeveloped by the expenditure of capital, and whose policy was *not* to depress their labourers into starvelings.

But with many virtues and excellent companionable qualities, he saw all subjects through only certain particular interests and one particular country.

The ascendancy of the aristocratic element in the British Constitution, might be endangered by the success of republicanism, the official predominance of the peerage and gentry might be undermined by the destruction of the *viva voce* system of voting, and whatever losses a new country may incur, English commerce and English manufactures must flourish under the auspices of *free trade*.

Dr. Dunglison announced the decease of the Rev. William Bengo Collyer, of London, a member of this Society.

Prof. Kendall announced the death of Prof. C. F. Gauss, of Gottingen, a member of this Society, who died Feb. 23, 1855, aged 77.

Mr. Peale exhibited a model of a fire-escape, consisting of a ladder of cord, with wooden steps, and so arranged that these steps can be attached to one another by their ends, and extended as a long pole or rod, equal to the aggregate length of the steps or rounds. The apparatus is provided with iron hooks, by means of which it may be suspended. It is not claimed as a new invention, a similar contrivance having been known many years ago.

The Committee appointed to confer with a Committee of



the City Councils, relative to a sale or exchange of the Society's Hall, reported progress.

The following resolution was offered by Mr. Foulke, which was read, considered and adopted:

*Resolved*, That a Committee of five be appointed, whose duty it shall be to consider the expediency of a memorial (and if expedient to prepare the draft of one) to the Legislature of the Commonwealth, containing such representations as they shall deem expedient for procuring the publication, in sections, on a large scale, of the general map of the geology of the State; and also the deposit, in the Department of State, of the materials procured during the geological survey of the State for said map, and for the reports of the State Geologist;—and that the said Committee make report at the next stated meeting of the Society.

The Committee appointed under this resolution consists of Mr. Foulke, Mr. Trego, Prof. Frazer, Dr. Le Conte and Dr. Franklin Bache.

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*Stated Meeting, April 20.*

Present, eighteen members.

Judge KANE, Vice-President, in the Chair.

Letters were read:—

From E. Brown Sequard, dated New York, April 10, 1855, acknowledging the receipt of notice of his election as a member of this Society:—

From the Geographical Society, dated Paris, Oct. 30, 1854, returning thanks for the Transactions of this Society. Vol. X. Part 3.

From the Boston Society of Natural History, dated April 12, 1855, acknowledging the receipt of Nos. 49–51 of the Proceedings: and—

From the Imperial Society of Sciences, Agriculture and the Arts, of Lille, without date, announcing a donation for the library.